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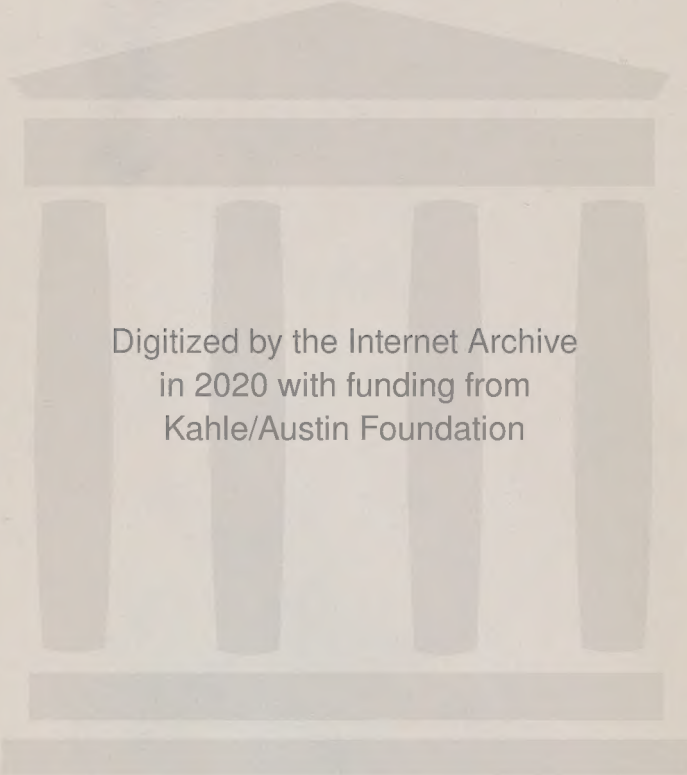
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IN JACOB BEHMEN'S SCHOOL

BY

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1926

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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PREFACE

Friends have found the earlier chapters of this book difficult, partly, I think, because Jacob Behmen was a mystic: things were obvious to him which are unknown to us. He said that he had seen God and the spiritual Light. Our origin is there; for we are spirit, born of God's Desire, meant to live in His Light and Love.

How, then, have we come here into companionship with the body and death—so blind that we are unaware even of the existence of the heavenly Light? Because, he said, an unloving will has diminished our life. God's Love is Life. To let go of love is to fail from eternal life, to enter into darkness; as the earth might if it let go of the sun's light and attraction.

The book begins with that sense of estrangement, that this world is not heaven; and, if not, what is it? But there is a heavenly Light, and a way to it. God's Love is every creature's Fate: and, therefore, the cause of suffering, because we fight against it. But it has descended into and is redeeming the world. Afterwards the book suggests how those who think with Jacob Behmen will see life and their calling in it.

IN JACOB BEHMEN'S SCHOOL

CHAPTER I

THE SCHOLAR ARRIVES

I

STRANGE, he thinks, how we all come into the world expecting happy conditions, as though we had always been used to happiness and were discomfited when we meet with troubles; or, better, as though we were indeed meant for joy, for the ecstasy of God's Love—perhaps its expectation of happiness is an evidence of the spirit's divine quality, and of God's intention for it—and were caught in a place where all is not well. He might bear his own troubles with fortitude, despising complaint, but there are other sufferings everywhere, and so little certainty of purpose; as though we were a people who had lost their way in a mist. There must be some destiny for

us, but we do not know which way to look for it. But, at least, it would be foolish to sit down where we are, content to be lost. So he must be always trying to understand what the world is, listening to what is said about our condition and the way out. One cannot look on the troubled world with untroubled eyes. Only yesterday he had spoken with an old man, half-articulate, who told him how—like another Job—in one week his two sons were killed in the war and he himself lost a fortune and was struck with paralysis. How forget such things? or, even if one wished to forget, how escape from their encounter, or from the doubt of what a world must be where such things are not uncommon?

He sees how differently people respond to the disappointment of their original gaiety. Some are cynical; some go wild for pleasure; some resolutely turn their minds away from unpleasant things; the best of those he meets work to make the world a better place: and he is sure that it is wiser to face life than to live self-deceived. Suddenly the worst turns best, if we go on. He thinks that it is but a languid religion which does not face the facts.

One day he overheard someone saying lightly to a friend: "Well, you know, the world is not heaven." He gave little heed to the words. But they returned of themselves to his mind, seemed to be bent on repeating themselves to him as though they had a meaning which he had not grasped, like the "Tolle, lege,"—take and read—which St. Augustine heard across the garden. The world is not heaven—the world is not heaven—the phrase had a sudden, poignant sense; not a light comment on circumstance. Heaven not here; the world outside of it, excluded from it. He seemed to see himself suddenly, here, and heaven far away. And God is in heaven. What place, then, is this? If it is not a heaven, what is it? And why are we here, not There?

How incurious, he thinks, we are of our condition. We have our traditional beliefs, occasional longings, but the rest of our days is occupied with business and home. Or these searchings seem too deep for us; no one, we say, can understand; nor indeed, he remembers, as Plato said, can any hope to understand unless they give their whole mind and will to it. So, for want of trying and thinking and seeking for

new thoughts, we fall into dull habits and live mechanically. Some shrewd stroke which life may deal us rouses us for awhile, but afterwards time heals the soreness of the wound and we fall back into the old ways. Things grow so familiar that we cease to think them strange. But, for himself, he is sensible of a restlessness of spirit, like a faint illumination which throws unusual lights on things; or like something which he had forgotten trying to reach the surface of consciousness in uneasy thoughts. One clear night, realising the vast distances and emptiness which surround the earth, he saw our condition here as though we were like sailors cast away on an inaccessible island; marooned, perhaps, because our wilfulness makes us impossible company for others. But that must have been so long ago that we have forgotten all about it and take our loneliness and ill-nature and sufferings as a matter of course.

II

He spoke with a theologian of his concern, but the theologian did not seem to share his new doubt as to what the world is. He said that his

creed compelled him to believe that this world is God's; though there are indeed difficulties, recognising, as we must, its imperfections, disease and sin and mortality. It might be that these things had their origin in part in the misuse of man's free will; or that they were God's providence, by which we are trained; or that they must be always a mystery until we had knowledge impossible here. But, the theologian said, at least this we might do, knowing the difference between good and evil: give ourselves to good works and leave alone things too high for us.

This he could not but believe to be true, that he should give himself with all his soul and strength to good causes; and, feeling a little spoiled in zeal, he left the theologian. But afterwards he reflected that we must also love God with all our mind and that, therefore, he did no wrong in following that leading. Since God is the last reality we must always seek to find Him by however dangerous and difficult a road. He must find out to what it was that phrase was bringing him, and that sense of our estrangement from heaven.

III

Unknowingly he was on his way to Jacob Behmen's School. Those chiming words, and other things heard afterwards, were leading him there. Once he listened to a physician speaking of his patients, who came to be healed of diseases brought upon them by the conflicts of their inner life. The physician said that he found in them two impulses, of one of which they were conscious and of which they approved, but that the other was a suppressed will, of which they were ashamed, and which they had even forced themselves to forget. But, he said, it still lived, unknown to them and in conflict with their conscious wishes. He rediscovered it for them, in their dreams, or, following from forgotten memory to memory, traced it to its origin long ago. If it were undiscovered and unreleased it must, struggling to express itself, create an inner conflict: one day it might break out suddenly and compel them to some act alien to their habit, bringing them into disgrace; or, if it never broke out in action, it would express itself in a bodily disability or functional disorder.

This condition, the physician said, was the

result of human development. Men have instincts, which they inherit from nature: the sex instinct, which is nature's will to reproduce itself in new creatures: the combative instinct, and fear, which are its will to preserve its creatures: the instinct to dominate, which is its will to master its circumstances and to live more fully. Everyone is born with these instincts. But, unrestrained, they come into conflict with the interests of other men and with the moral ideas which society accepts. Society, therefore, requires the individual to repress his natural instincts. It instils into him another will contrary to them. Thus there may arise in him a conflict, open or unconscious, between the instincts which he and all men inherit from nature and the social will which men accept for the common good.

He asked the physician how such conflicts were resolved. He answered that the natural instincts must neither be suppressed nor extinguished, but changed in direction, "sublimated," he said, so that they find objects not in conflict with social morality. Let the sexual instinct find its satisfaction in a happy marriage, and serve its purpose under harmless conditions; or, if that be impossible, let it find high expres-

sion in charities and public services, in the love of the beautiful and in art, or in the worship of God Himself. The combative instinct, rightly directed, becomes the strength of character which triumphs in good causes. The will to dominate may be exercised benevolently. When the natural instincts are redirected to ends approved by the social ideal the conflict is ended; the one will no longer struggles with the other, but they both go the same way.

He asked again if the physician could say what these instincts were, that are common to all men and to nature, and what was their origin. But he said that he was a physician. The question was beyond his competence. Perhaps the philosophers might know. His own concern was how to cure his patients of their inner conflicts.

IV

So, wishing to know more, he went to talk with a philosopher who, he knew, was not lost in abstract ideas but studied things as they are and was acquainted with the sciences. He told him what the physician had said and asked

whether he could tell him what were these natural instincts, and what was their origin. The philosopher answered at once that they were the instincts of Life, in which they had their origin: that Life is the impulse behind evolution which has brought the world to be what it is. It is a creative energy: it forces its way against the dead weight of matter and organises it into living creatures, by a long process of experiment and many failures. He showed him how it began to live in the first minute and formless cells, in the marshes of the early world; that it discovered how to make them mobile and sensitive; afterwards to develop limbs, wings, teeth, scales, claws—huge and ungainly monsters, now long since perished, beasts and birds of prey, insects, apes and men—all the slow creation of Life struggling to shape matter to its will and to animate it, in forms better perfected—though all that it has made it abandoned as incapable of further progress, except man, in whom its impulse and instincts are still at work.

He asked him, then, whether Life were God, since it could create a world. The philosopher said that the theologians must answer: but, if so, then it was a strange god indeed that should

need so many ages to create a world after so many failures, and against the dead weight of matter restraining his will. No almighty God certainly: nor a God of love, since Life is pitiless to its creatures, abandons them in multitudes to extinction, compels them to prey upon one another, killing, poisoning, devouring, developing more ferocity and cunning: no better in men either, who, if they lived only by the instincts which Life gives to them, would spend even more of their time than they now do in mutual destruction.

Surely that was true: at least, part of the truth; what the philosopher said about Life. It seemed to speak with that insistent phrase of what the world is; not heaven, but a place inhabited by unloving and unheavenly things; marooned, therefore, here, as he had thought that night, because they would be impossible company in heaven; or enclosed and straitened here lest they should disturb God's peace. Yet, he is sure, not forgotten; there must be a way back, and hope for the repentant. So it was that, always asking and seeking and always becoming more sure that there is some unrealised tragedy, some loss, an estrangement from God

and heaven, fallen on us, he came in time to the school of Jacob Behmen, and entered there, and learned something of his heavenly wisdom; though Jacob Behmen was no philosopher nor doctor nor theologian, but a cobbler and a mystic who said that he had not received what he knew by reasoning, but that he had seen, through external things, spiritual realities.

CHAPTER II

WHAT THE WORLD IS

I

JACOB BEHMEN'S school received him gladly, as they would any who came to them with that sense of human tragedy. They said that the thought which came to him on that starry night was symbolical: our estrangement is not a thing of time and space, not external—for external things are but the expressions of spirit—but our separation is from heaven, and heaven and God are spirit. There is a material world, they said, this world; and there is a far vaster, spiritual world. This world is but a little hidden sorrow upon the face of that shining deep. The spirit's origin is there, in the eternal Light, where God created worlds and kingdoms, and spirits of every degree and glory, by His Desire, that He might have objects for His Love. God and heaven are spirit, but this external world is material and mortal. In His Light

there is no ugliness, nor dying; and where His Love reigns there is no evil, as here. So the cobbler said, that this world is not heaven, that we here are prodigals in a far country; Adam excluded from Paradise; over us all hangs the shadow which hides heaven from us.

Jacob Behmen made him ashamed because his thoughts had been so narrow and small, confined to this dim world, and to his own life. But when he spoke to some of what he had learned, they stared at him as though he were mad. They were content: they had never heard of the spiritual Light: this world was good enough for them. Even those who lived in rebellion against the world's ways still seemed to believe, impossibly, that God made and willed the very things which His spirit in them hates; that they were His providence; that Love made and did these things. He remembered that when those we love die, some say to comfort us that it is the will of God. He began to see that it is not so. God is Love: it is impossible that such things are from Him. With every resource of love and skill they fought against the disease: if love and pity are from God, then He fought through them against it: and He,

when it is over, comforts grief. It was never His will. That disease was a natural thing, at enmity with man, careless of suffering. Something else there is in the world which cares, which inspires men to find the remedy and to give their love and skill to save. That is God's Love, entering the world. But how much there is here which is indifferent, hostile, cruel. This is no place where love reigns alone as in heaven.

II

Jacob Behmen would have him consider his own self, what he is; that he is body and spirit; and the world, which is like himself. There is that in the world which is stronger than its life. Jacob Behmen called it externality; that is, matter, body. We are so used to it, born into it and carrying it with us all our days until it is buried in its tomb, that we do not perceive what it is, that it is that which makes the world a place of restraint. In thought and will our spirit flies to the ends of the earth after its desire, but it comes there in the body only by long roads and slow fatigues. It is an hour's effort to go to the next town, spent in overcoming

the weight and resistance of external things to our will, and a year is not sufficient for the journey round the world, even with the aid of the mechanical inventions by which we try to overcome our material limitations. Desire and imagination are free; but externally we are prisoners. Life has had to construct for us, out of that which is its prison, a material body: this complication of bones and muscles and nerves, of processes of digestion and elimination, of labouring heart and blood and breathing, to provide us with a little freedom. There is no outward escape—we have to make the best of what release we have; of the sight which sees through fleshly lenses a few miles; of the ears which hear at a few yards' distance; of hands which feel for recognition. Every creature here suffers the same restraint. That which animates material things is no God at liberty to do what He wills. It is the prisoner of matter; a Prometheus Bound.

This world is a place of restraint. We are straitened here and kept from our will. That is no hardship nor injustice, but a necessity, and a hope, because loveless desire, if it were free, would work who knows what evil. The restraint

is merciful, happy even. Lovelessness here is not omnipotent, nor free: it can animate only dying things, made in materiality only through ages of effort and failure: by experiment; by the building up of unstable material compounds against inevitable dissolution; by a multitude of contrivances, such as you and I in our lesser way use every day because of our insufficiency to master external conditions, as we build a house, laying brick on brick, and beam to beam, and finish it after many days, and see it in need of repair all our life, and afterwards others remove its ruins; so this external world is made, not freely by omnipotence, but by effort under restraint.

If we say that this world is not heaven none would contradict us. But that is to confess that it is not God's world—our Father is in heaven, where His Love reigns alone—but a place apart. We shall not say, as one of whom it is told, that, for himself, he looked for no place worse than this after death, because this world is Hell. No, not that: but a purgatory, if you will; a place of restraint.

CHAPTER III

WHAT THE HEAVENLY LIGHT IS

I

THOUGH that was their belief in the school they were glad people because they also understood the omnipotence of God's Love and knew that, though the shadow hides it from us, the heavenly Light is not far away. Few can see it, as Jacob Behmen did. More may be aware of it for a moment or an hour; and everyone, least or greatest, can know and enter into and receive the Love of God, which has its origin there, though they may not understand whence it comes. But, though not many have the gift to see it, yet in the school they knew which way to look for the heavenly Light. God and heaven are spirit: it is not found, therefore, externally; but inwardly, through mind and spirit. We must look for the Realm of God's Love and for the heavenly Light that way. But it lies beyond

a shadow. That way we are, most of us, blind; we come upon a darkness. It seems to be the right road because mind and spirit are free from those restraints which we suffer externally, and even from the mortality of material things. No thought can rust, no thief can break through nor steal our love and ideals; neither is character buried with the body in its tomb. That way it seems that at least we come nearer to the place where treasure may be laid up imperishably. If there be a heaven, it lies that way. But when we look for it we come upon a darkness. When we enter into our inner life, closing eyes and ears and senses so that we may be alone there, one by one our thoughts, desires, hopes, come up out of a darkness, pass by a moment in the light of consciousness, and are gone again into darkness. They are not lost; they pass into a place, obscured from us, where memory is and all the experience which has gone to make our character, what we are, our soul. But even our own soul is hidden from us. We shall not see it until the darkness is removed. We only know what it is by what comes out from it: our will and desire and deeds. But the darkness is so close that even our own self is hidden from us; still

more whatever there might be besides, if heaven and God's Love lie beyond it.

So because we cannot see what lies that way we return to this familiar, external world, the more conscious, by contrast, of its restraints. There are walls without, and the darkness within. Though it be a large restraint and we can make it rich, still it is a confinement. None of us is free to go where he would, nor to do his own will. We live in a world where none is free; and when we look inward it is into a night, which might be full of life, if we could see through the darkness.

II

Jacob Behmen said that he had seen God, and the scholar was not of those who turn away from mystics. Just as the musician has a gift unmeaning to the unmusical, and as the logician's reasoning is received with impatience by the illogical, so, he knew, he might well have the humility to think that there are some who have gifts of perception beyond his own, and that what they say that they have seen was not necessarily folly because he did not share their genius.

When he had sat long in the cobbler's school he began to understand that there is, out of reach of eye and hand, but all about us, a heavenly Light. It exists, not only because much comes into our mind and will which has no origin in nature, nor only because our satisfaction and growth lie that way, but because we may become a little aware of it.

Maybe that is a gift, though he who has it is no better than he who has it not. There are souls all concerned with outward things, and others who grow into the consciousness of the Light. But whoever is aware of it no more doubts of its reality than he who walks abroad on a summer day doubts of the sunlit fields.

Once they sent him from the school to spend a day alone in the mountains. Many have seen the glory which sometimes seems interfused with the round world and seas and setting suns; but that day he discovered that the Light is no earthly thing. Outwardly it was dull weather, clouded and dim. But as the long loneliness stilled his mind a shining peace began to transfigure all that he saw. Then it came to him, that this Light and joy, the happiest of all things, were rising from the silence within, and that

the mind looking outward projected its happiness upon external things. It was not that the world was full of a light which shone from without, but that the Light is an inward illumination, using the stillness of the mind and the hush of surface things as its occasion to appear, and shine through, and be known to us. Indeed, the coming of the Light does not wait on occasion, but may shine anywhere, and at any time, when the mind is still: and, he thought, when some who have experienced it seem to speak as though the world were all aglow with it always, bathed in the Love of God, and as though they were blind to the reality of evil and darkness here, it is because they are so dazzled by its inward shining, and so project it upon outward things, that the world seems what it is not, and evil only a delusion, sin only a falling short. But when we learn that the Light is an invasion from elsewhere, we cannot help but see evil in its stark ugliness contrasted with the Light; the cruel will behind nature, the blood and shambles out of which natural things have evolved, and man's loveless instincts; that, therefore, the world is like a far country, absent from heaven.

III

He began to understand, though he could not see openly as the cobbler did, that the Light lies beyond that darkness which we find in the mind. Indeed, the darkness is the Light, that is, it is like a night, full of life, but into which we cannot see because of our blindness. We look for it in vain, and deny its existence because it is not external. We are like those flat-land creatures who had no knowledge of a third dimension. If there were creatures of a world of two dimensions, like pieces of paper laid upon a table, only able to move to and fro and round about one another, flatly; if they were blind to all the world above them, and unable to enter into it; then, if anyone told them of its existence, they would ask: Where is it? and search and never find it in the world they know, their flat-land. But it would still be all about them, though they vehemently denied it because they could neither see nor enter into it.

So with ourselves; the Light is all about us always. But we are blind to it because it is of another condition, as it were in a fourth dimension, though at hand. There is a door that way;

our own mind and spirit belong to that other condition. That needs no proof. We think, and feel, and are what we are. But where are our thoughts and emotions and character? Not here: not in the brain: no research into its infinitely little fibres and cells can find anything save fibres and cells. No thought has ever been seen, no emotion handled, no character photographed. They are somewhere beyond sight or handling; like the Light and the Love of God. But we know where: the vibrations of nerves and cells end in the brain, but they emerge upon the other side as thoughts and emotions and, combined, repeated, desired, as character, things of another condition, mental and spiritual. Where that world touches this, where the soul receives from the brain and gives out its impulses through the brain, there consciousness lights up a little of that world. But only a little, enough to prove to any man, by his own consciousness, that there exists much besides the things of three dimensions which can be seen and handled and among which we move externally. That way, inwards, through thought and spirit, in a direction which leads out of the world of narrowed, three-dimensioned

space, beyond the darkness, we must seek the Light and the Love of God.

Only slowly did the scholar understand this. He had lived, as we do, as though there were no place but this external world; so subject and accustomed to it that the truth only slowly dawned on him, that material things are not everything, that there is much more out of sight. We say: Death overtakes all things, because here all things die. Nothing dies, except external things. We believed that to suffer is man's fate. The Love of God is his fate; and conflict with it is suffering.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT THE LOVE OF GOD IS

I

THAT sense of absence and loss—that this world is not heaven, but a place obscured, straitened, remote, and that we are not fit company for heaven—was not far from the thought of the school: but they said it with a better understanding. He had not understood God's Desire and Love: that He made all things by His Desire that He might have objects for His Love; by the "Wrath" of His fiery longing, that He might satisfy it in His Love. He manifests Himself in Desire and Love through all creation. That is His way, His nature; and, therefore, the fate of His creatures. All creatures are desirous; and their fate is to love God and one another. He had not understood what the Love of God is. He had not believed so much of the Love of God; that it is not only the good-

will, as of a father to his sons, which God has to all His creatures; nor only man's filial looking to Him and love: but that it is the strongest of all things, the very movement and generation of God Himself. As the planets swing about the sun by their own motion, which holds them away from it, and by its attraction, which draws them to it; and, but for the sun's drawing, each would fly out upon its own path into outer darkness and cold: so it is that God gave to every spiritual creature a separate being, a peculiar nature and motion, apart. His Desire separated them from Himself, but His Love draws them to Him, as the sun holds the planets in their orbits.

His creatures must always be desirous, because the flame of His Desire entered into them at their creation. It is their energy and elation. If they go God's way, satisfying their desire, as He satisfies His own, in love, they go the way of fate, and share the eternal life. But if they let go of love, they let go of eternal life, and go out where death and darkness are; and have nothing but anxious and unsatisfied desire.

II

They told him that such is our case, our estrangement; why this world is not heaven. There is among us that which will not go God's way. It is old, as old as life itself. We inherit it from nature: those loveless instincts which, if they had their way, would wreck the good which we have won, are natural. We see their origin in the natural world from which we rose, indifferent there to suffering, careless of the individual, and, despite all the restraints which good-will and society have set upon them, still the causes of our hatreds, wars, jealousies, rivalries; of all our evils, great or mean. We cannot complain that we are subject to them. They are our own, by long acceptance and inheritance; sometimes willingly and exultantly obeyed, sometimes overgrown by a better nature, sometimes all but dead and buried: but present even in the best of us.

III

There was a boy, lately, fourteen years old, twice charged with the murder of little children.

His defenders urged that he was mad. But, because he knew what he did, the plea was refused: he would have been hanged but for his youth. Afterwards a psychologist wrote publicly of his case. He said that the boy was not mad, unless everyone is mad. To kill is a natural instinct, controlled in the normal man by training or religion. But the instinct comes to the surface when restraints are released or absent. It is natural to kill: every creature kills to live: that is life's way. In that poor boy there was nothing sufficient to resist. The folk with whom we meet are kind enough. But the gentlest, in the heat of hand-to-hand fighting, "sees red," as we say; he becomes mad with the lust which was never dead in him; even by use he may come to kill without a qualm. Everyone knows the hot rush of anger which, if we let it submerge us, would say and think as Cain did. We may believe that it is extinct in us; but it is there, like lava beneath the smokeless volcano. As the psychologist said again, though we agree that murder is a crime, we let many die of want and neglect, because we have a natural and instinctive indifference to suffering. If not, would there be one slum left in the land?

Neither, he added, are we ashamed to take the life of animals for food, though we are at pains to do it hygienically, in back streets.

IV

The natural and loveless will is a spiritual thing; real and loveless. One must not be afraid to face the facts. It lies behind the world, a raging desire, thrusting through material restraint towards power, by the creation of myriads of individual, transient creatures animated with its own nature, in which it struggles, learns, leaps forward in an ascending scale of development, releasing itself in them: like a torrent eating away a sandbank; like an artist labouring with a poor medium; like a prisoner sawing at his chains. It is Desire—and God gave it to all things in their creation—but averted from love, at enmity with Him. It is the cause of our exclusion from the heavenly Light. How can lovelessness live with God? Besides, because it will not go God's way and cannot enter into eternal life, it has brought on us its own falling away from divinity. The spirit which no longer feeds on the bread of heaven

starves. It becomes degraded, goes on the way to darkness and externality, becomes companioned with mortality. It materialises itself, in teeth and claws and poison-fangs; writes itself on our faces. When the scholar heard that he looked round with new eyes. It was plain to him. He read himself and all creatures here anew: how that this dark lovelessness, grown upon us, has brought us into this condition.

An old-fashioned belief—of all the better authority, the scholar thinks, for that. He remembers climbing the winding stairs of a cathedral tower. At every higher stage, where a new window opened, he saw the same landscape, but in a broader horizon. So, as the mind climbs, it rediscovers old faiths in wider settings: and everyone who enters even a little into God's Love and is of a changed mind knows that this is his tragedy, that he had an old will which has let go of love.

v

We rose out of nature and have inherited its instincts, yet we have shaken them off a little. Men have changed; every man changes. He

comes to hate this world's ways. He must, if he would be happy. They tell us that if we would be at peace in ourselves we must redirect our natural instincts into a better way. They speak as though we, with nothing given to us but natural instincts, were able to invent ideals which are contrary to our instincts; as though we could of ourselves change our nature. But where do we discover unnatural ideals? or how have we ever come to desire them? or how can we find the strength to defeat the old nature in us? Virtues and ideals are selfless, temperate, peaceful, loving, having the very qualities which contradict our natural instincts.

Until the cobbler told him, the scholar did not understand how man could change, nor how ever love came into a loveless world. He did not know what the Love of God is: that it is the strongest of all things. The Greeks believed that Fate was much more than the compulsion of outward events. It was that which entered into the minds of men and led them into fatal courses. Jacob Behmen showed him that the Love of God is Fate. Fate laid hold of the wills of men and possessed them, compelling them to a destiny which they would have refused. It

made them its creatures. It was like the wind or tide against which they beat in vain, but yet not an outward force. So the Love of God compels every creature to its fate in Itself.

If the Love of God is Fate, and if we were so created that we can be satisfied only in His Love, though we are turned away from it by our own will and by the hold which that old lovelessness has on us, it is not hard then to understand, what seemed impossible, that we are able to direct our instincts towards other ends than nature gave us. As the compass-needle turns to the north when that which averts it is removed, so we, when we let go of our natural will, revert to God's Love, as to our true north. We were so created that in no way can our desire be satisfied except in Love: that is God's way, and every creature's fate. While anything averts us from our fate, whether it be our own will or inherited instinct, we can never be at peace. But when we are released from its false direction of itself desire turns towards its destiny, into the Love of God, as the compass-needle to the north. We understand for the same reason how it is possible to discover ideals unknown here and unnatural, because

the Love of God besieges us with the things which belong to it. We understand how we can master even our own nature, because the Love of God is omnipotent and at hand.

But the Love of God is not natural here. It is a stranger among us, because the world's ways are alienated from it. But it will not leave us helpless. It obsesses us with the imagination of better things. Our ideals are its work; its suggestion to us; the beginning of its possession of our will and of its redemption of the world.

VI

We create our little works, dying things, in this straitened place, and wonder why we are unhappy and suffer. We have our "problem of evil"; though, in the cobbler's school, if anyone came there to theorise about it, they would deal with him with a certain gentle irony at first which would convert speculation into something more personal and searching. Is our concern, they would say, really a passion for knowledge, or is there not behind it, if one were wholly honest with oneself, a vanity which believes that it deserves better things than it

receives? Why do we expect the world to be a wholly comfortable place, since it is not heaven? And, if we had any lingering sense of ill-treatment because we are put to live in an unheavenly place, that would not last long in the cobbler's school, where no one, not even the best scholar, would venture to say that he was fit for heaven. Besides, since the world is not a heaven, what are we doing to make it a better place? One's sense of martyrdom fails in that company: self-pity seems the meanest of sins.

We have our "problem of evil"; why the Love of God, being all-powerful, permits the world's sufferings. But it is the Love of God which is the cause of suffering. It is Fate, and we, and our world, fight against it. It is the strongest of all things, and the Ground of all that is. We see, then, in what case we, and our world, are. Whenever we go our own way, not Love's, we are fighting against Fate, and must suffer. Whatever we try to create, lovelessly in the Ground of Love, must come to nothing. It is as impossible to create anything which can endure without love as it is to build a house in contradiction to the laws of gravitation, because God's Love is the Ground of all that is.

If anyone builds his life on self-assertion he comes into conflict with society, which requires of him certain submissions and abnegations. It is by now so far grounded on love that it will not tolerate his self-assertion. He ends in prison, or at St. Helena. His "pleasure principle," as the psychologists say, comes into collision with the "reality principle." Or if another writes a book to prove a theory which is false, not loving the truth, but some end of his own, though he omit and wrest and pass over the facts, when he has done his worst the fabric will not hold together, because he has tried to create against Love. But if he would write a book to the glory of God, he must leave all that he has seen and read and heard to come together in the mind—let every thought love every other—without self-will, and he discovers that they can fall together into a picture of reality, unexpected perhaps, but better than anything which he could himself have willed. Or, if he were a chemist, seeking to build up a compound after his own ideas, very likely he would destroy himself and his laboratory by explosion, by the violent refusal of the substances which he sought to control to obey any other affinity

than that upon which they are grounded. But if he is wise, he seeks rather to create by the discovery and use of original affinities, not imposing his self-will on creation, but following its laws: seeking to think God's thoughts after Him; to go His way; to enter into the Ground of Love.

So, he thinks, with the world: its loveless desire strives to create, by the elimination of the weak, and by the survival of the strong, some last creature which should be the embodiment of its lust; something of which those dreams of glory which madden men and drive them to attempt the subjugation of the world are the phantasy. But such dreams come to nothing in the end. It must be so. Nothing can endure unless it is grounded on love, because God's Love is the only ground there is. History is always repeating the obvious fact. They that draw the sword perish by the sword. Empires founded on force are overthrown by force. Greedy money-makers quarrelling with one another end in bankruptcy. The rivalries of sects dismember the Church. Jealousies break up family life. Dissensions in a political party lead to its defeat. Nothing lasts unless some

form or measure of God's Love inherent in it holds it together. It is the love of the Motherland which unites an Empire. Loyalty to their common purpose consolidates the political party. Sympathy and understanding make happy homes. The love of the brethren creates the one Universal Church. Even money-makers grow rich only by association and accommodation; and there must be honour even among thieves. Nothing is created, not wealth, nor learning, nor the kingdom of heaven on earth, without a ground of love. If we had the worst will in the world our work would break down unless we introduced into it from the beginning the cement of love, by which only things are held together. Thus it is that against our will, lest our work should perish, we are compelled to admit love into it. We set ourselves the impossible task of doing evil with a good will; as though we began to build a house according to our own ideas, and our walls would not stand, until we rebuilt them in other fashion: and in the end found that we had built the house after another plan, imposed on us; or as though, as indeed it seems to be, loveless desire set out to make a world without love and found that no progress was

possible to it without a herd instinct or social bond and national loyalty; so had been forced to admit love, more and more, into its works lest they should fall to pieces; because God's Love is its Fate.

VII

If that were our case, if our evil will were defeated again and again because of the very nature of things, we should at last repent of our folly and come to be wiser and saner. Our very will would begin to change, however hard it had been, convinced by experience and degradation—if that were our case. But it is ours. If we begin to be aware of the Love of God, the world knows through us. If we begin to see our condition with new eyes, life sees in us. That we are so many and transient seems sometimes to reduce the value of the individual to nothing, until we recognise that each of us, in his peculiar note and character, provides an opportunity for the old wild passions or for the Love of God. It may be that we have some door in our spirit through which the Love of God might find a way into the world. Or it may be that it is

haunted by evil things seeking admittance to man's experience. It matters what we let in; as though we were each a stone in the hard wall of this world, which lies dark and cold in the ocean of God's sunlight, and that as we melt and yield, anyone of us, so the frozen whole yields and melts and one day will be transformed.

That may seem far away. How slow the victories of God's Love appear to be. But there is this strange and hopeful fact, though it is but what one would expect of God's irresistible Love, that the end comes nearer always more quickly. Five hundred thousand years ago the man-like ape left his traces in the Pleiocene rocks; two hundred and fifty thousand years later came a creature with a human resemblance; after another one hundred and fifty thousand years followed the sub-man; fifty thousand years after there lived a race which first dwelt in tents, nomadic tribes and nations; twelve thousand years, maybe, later are found the traces of new men who had gods and arts and civilisation; then the ages of history began, of great empires and religions, of a search for God or for worldly power: Indian, Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek,

Roman; and last, only two thousand years ago, the Christian era came, in which humanity has gone forward to a condition as different from that of its first ancestry as God is different from man. Every stage has been shorter than the last, as though each gain made the next easier; as though Love broke in, infinitely slowly at first, then more easily, now rapidly, and the hard walls seem ready to crumble and melt away, soon.

CHAPTER V

OLD INDICATIONS

I

IN Jacob Behmen's school they turned the world upside down, seeing it, not from the external standpoint, but from the heavenly Light. To the natural man spiritual things seem phantasy: what is solid, visible and external, is to him real; though how he can indeed think so is hard to understand, since he himself is far more will and character, desire and spirit, than he is flesh. But to those who think with Jacob Behmen externality is a dimmed and limited condition; this world is a twilight place where the natural man lives as unconscious of a neighbouring heaven as the fish in the deep sea are of the sky, or as the seed in the earth is of the sunlight. It needs a change of mind to think as the cobbler did, from the sunlight; a reversal of outlook. The new mind grows slowly out of externalised habits. It becomes aware of the

wealth of the inner life; begins to trust in spiritual things more and more with experience; at last lives in the certainty of their reality and power; and, if to that experience be happily added one day some consciousness of the Light, it enters finally into the supra-sensual life.

Yet the scholar recognises that this revolution of outlook which he has accepted did not come unprepared, was not in contradiction with all that he had learned before he came into the cobbler's school. There had been indications before; knowledge, discovery and thought, which, as men have come to know more of their world, led that way; to being spiritually minded, to giving the priority to immaterial things. Whether it were that he walked in his garden and went over in his mind what the biologist could tell him of why the tree grows or how the spider learnt to spin his web, or how this great world came to be; or whether he talked with that psychologist, or read philosophies, or wondered what life meant, and death, it had led the same way. Those old problems tend to solve themselves spiritually.

The grain of mustard-seed grows to be root and stem, branches, leaves, flower and fruit.

But what is growth? How can that which is simple and formless become a rich and organised creation? The body of the seed is material, carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and protein, an unstable compound, continually under a process of change and finally breaking down. But in it there is no tree in little: no oak in the acorn. One can only say that there is some quality in the seed which enables it to grow; that growth is its function. But externally there is nothing to explain function. The chemical compound seems to be the condition of growth, not its cause. One can describe the process, what happens externally, but that is not explanation. While the scientific mind, concerned with material and external substances and laws, is reluctant to look elsewhere for causes, in the face of what is otherwise inexplicable, it begins, at least, to consider the possibility of the existence of some immaterial principle at work in the process of growth.

How does the spider know how to spin a web; or the newly hatched chick to pick up food; or the birds to build nests and migrate; or any creature to carry through the long and complicated actions by which it lives, and

which we call instinctive, although to give a thing a name is not to explain it? An instinct is that which performs unconsciously the work of intelligence. In ourselves it is often the result of habit. We practise a scale on the piano, at first with a painful exercise of will and effort, afterwards with facility, and finally unconsciously. The playing has become instinctive; still an intelligent and mental act, but so often done that it requires no conscious attention. But the piano-playing is not explicable materially, in terms, for example, of chemical reaction between the keyboard and the fingertips; nor anyhow without supposing the existence of mind. One seems to be led to the same conclusion as to the spider's web-spinning; there must once have been purpose in it, and effort, which have resulted in habit. But whose habit? The spider inherits it fully formed; it begins to spin at birth. The habit is racial; the result of the experience of generations of spiders, remembered and preserved, and repeated in every individual. There must be something like a racial mind at the back of instinct.

So, on a vast scale, in the evolution of the world. How did the thin gases diffused in space

grow to be this diverse and rich world, become man and self-conscious? One can, perhaps, describe the process in terms of the combination and re-arrangement of atoms and molecules—though mind and consciousness are not material nor molecular—but what arranged and combined them? Which is easier to think, that the world was made by the “fortuitous concourse of atoms,” by chance—whatever chance may be—mind, will, memory, love growing out of a gas, or, as Jacob Behmen would say, that when we look externally for the cause of things we begin from the wrong end and are seeing the world upside-down: that the inward, the mental and spiritual—will, intelligence, memory, desire and love come first, and that it is spirit which impresses its signature on external things and gives them their form and organisation?

In the study of the mind we go a long way to-day with Jacob Behmen. The psychologists even use his language and call what a man is his soul. They no longer say that thought and desire are the secretions of the brain: at most they believe that mental activity takes place to the accompaniment of external movements in the brain, or that the mind transmits through

the brain energy which sets activity in motion. Brain and mind, the external and the inward, the material and the spiritual, influence one another, but the mental, and inward and immaterial, is prior to and greater than the external and bodily. In them one must look for the springs of action and character and for the answer to our questions about life. Indeed, though he uses other words, and has no liking for current theologies, the psychologist interprets man's inner life much as the cobbler did. He finds deep in the mind of everyone primitive and racial instincts, self-interests which conflict with altruism, and, at the base of these, one urge, a "conation," "libido"—lust—which, he says, is the movement behind evolution. In man it has been called "the Pleasure Principle," the movement of desire towards self-interested ends, in contrast with "the Reality Principle" which prevents and forbids its satisfaction. They even compare that fundamental urge towards self-assertion and self-satisfaction to the "original sin" of the theologian; and, as the latter would say that we must become new men and satisfy our desires, not impossibly, in selfish ends, but in the love of God and man, so the psychologist

tells his patients to sublimate their instincts by directing them upon wider interests. He delivers them from self, from the natural man. Theologian and psychologist both go along the same road, believing, alike, in the supremacy of the inward and mental and spiritual.

The metaphysicians are at one in giving priority to inward and spiritual things. They say that all things are mind, with Berkeley; or that matter is "mind-stuff," with Butler Burke; or that mind and matter are the obverse and reverse of the same original substance, with Haeckel; or that there are spiritual, "heavenly," forms which shape material things, as Plato said; or, with Aristotle, that there are forces moving towards ends which are the causes of growth and evolution; or, with Hegel, that all things are the manifestation and procession of the Absolute Idea; with Schopenhauer, that it is Will which creates, and repents of its creation as Reason, or with von Hartmann they trace in detail an unconscious Life at work in all creatures; or believe, with Bergson, in Life, always contending against the downward trend of matter to evolve an organised world; or, with Bernard Shaw, they become the prophets of a

Life-Force and enter into its movement and purpose. They all put the inward first: mind, Life, spirit.

II

Spirit is first; afterwards that which is external. Without spirit, so Jacob Behmen said, there would be no external world, for it is spirit which writes its signature on external things. They are its containers, its vehicles, the wax for the seal of spirit. Or, as ice, water and steam are the same thing in different conditions, so might one say that the external is spirit come into an outward and limited condition. Unless spirit is first, life is meaningless. It seems to have neither origin, then, nor end nor rule. We seem, so, to come into the world knowing neither whence nor whither, nor how to live. Life becomes a Sphinx's riddle, insoluble. All that we can say, if we understand nothing of the truth of spirit, is that there are pleasures which we can enjoy, while we are young, and prizes for the strong, while they are strong, and certain incomplete safeties to be won, and after that a waiting for death. Or, if some obscure

instinct, whose origin we do not recognise, impels us to work for the betterment of external conditions, even that seems useless in the end, because the external world itself goes the same way; it was a nebulous gas, a star, a living world, and one day will be cold and dead. From the external aspect the world, and our own life, are meaningless.

But, spiritually, it is all reasonable and full of meaning and hope. If spirit is first; since, besides this external world, we live in a spiritual world; and since, as we are body, so we are also spirit, as we are in flesh mortal and subject to external evils, so we are also in spirit indestructible and invulnerable—because external things are subject to wounds and disease and mortality, but spirit is beyond their reach, of another kind and another condition—then what we gain in spirit, in character, in experience of good and evil and of the Love of God, is treasure which nothing can take away. Therefore life gets a meaning. He who knows it does not say: While I am young I will enjoy what pleasures I may; nor: I will fight for what prizes I can win; nor yet: I will make safety my aim; but rather this, that out of good and

evil, trial or joy or sorrow, adventure or dryness, he will make himself a greater soul, a character, a spiritual and imperishable thing, illumined and entered into the Love of God; which, when this body dies, will be released, a treasure found again in heaven.

Mind and character matter most. A high spirit carries a man through difficult situations. A quiet mind saves him from care. Wisdom preserves him from the pitfalls into which the foolish fall. Knowledge gives him command of the world. Sympathy wins and keeps friends. What we are is of more importance to us for happy living than what we have. But all these things, a high spirit, a quiet mind, wisdom, knowledge, love and character, are inward qualities. The inward is more valuable than the external. If a man has comfort and position and with them is spiritless or unquiet or foolish or malicious, he will still be fearful and restless, given to stupidities and angers, or be blown about anywhere for want of character. But though another man were poor and obscure, but has wisdom or a good heart or quiet mind or steadfast character, he will be happier than the other. We shall not say that outward welfare

has no value, but that mental and moral qualities are far more of use to us, if one would be sufficient for life and happy.

Still more so, if one would be equal to the confrontation of death. Nothing external is of any use then. We leave it behind. Before he came into Jacob Behmen's school, even then, it had always seemed to him probable, at the very least, that the inward life does not die with the body. It is not bodily. It has no bones that can be broken, no blood that can be lost, no tissues into which the microbes of disease can enter. No external violence can reach the spirit. That is the insoluble problem which has defeated so many tyrannous wills, that though a man's body may be torn to pieces on the rack, though a people's eyes only are left them to weep with, their convictions are not changed. One may smash the musician's piano so that he cannot make his music heard, but he himself and his genius remain. He goes away to find another instrument. So, when violence or disease break up the body, it seemed at least probable that the soul, what we are, compounded of so many past experiences, lives on. This much more was certain, that, if we survive physical

death, we shall after death be still ourselves. We shall carry our qualities with us; what we have become. If so, in the face of certain death and that probability, at least, that our self with its desires and experiences survives, it was evident that it is folly to live for anything but the spirit.

CHAPTER VI

THE POND IN THE FIELD

I

AS the scholar learned that there is a heavenly Light and that this is a world, mortal and material, to which another law is natural, and read in the Gospels the sayings of Jesus, he discovered that in his new knowledge he had the high company of his Lord. He stood not so far from His outlook in the heavenly Light. Once he watched the world with eyes which had never seen anything better; but now he understands why his Lord wept over men's ignorance of their darkened condition. Jesus said the very same difficult and unbelieved things which Jacob Behmen taught. Jacob Behmen learned them from Him.

He taught us to pray, to say: Our Father which art in heaven—that is, to believe that there is another condition, where God is, our origin, better than this: to adore that holy

state: to long that His will may be done here—as, therefore, it is not now done; to ask to be delivered from the evil—from the evil one, as some interpret his words, the same whom He spoke of as the prince of this world, who had no part in Him, as he has in us in our old and natural instincts; by whom He said that He was tempted in the wilderness, who offered Him what he had in his power to give, and did give in part to some, the kingdoms of the world, because the world is his; who through the loveless will of his own creatures killed Jesus.

He spoke often of the kingdom of heaven, that is, of a spiritual world and condition, which, though neither external nor visible—when they say, Lo, here, or Lo, there, go not after them, He said—is always among us, in us; in the consciousness of which He seemed to live always, not fitfully as we might. He told Pilate that the kingdom was not of this world. But it was a discovery for those who find it so precious that a man would sell all that he had for it. It was like a little seed, a truth, which grows to be the greatest of all herbs, which when it is buried in this earth will spring up to shelter all nations. It was like a king who sent

his servants and his only son to unfaithful husbandmen. In all that He said of it, so familiar and, perhaps, so little understood, He was revealing the fact of the heavenly Light. Men have lost the knowledge of it and must get a new heart sensitive to it. They must be born again, of the spirit, into it.

Did He not suffer the restraints which we suffer here, the bodily limitations, the long journeys, the fatigues and the darkness, the cloud in the mind between us and the Light, so that once He cried out to God as though God had forsaken Him, and daily could keep touch with heaven only by long prayer and solitude?

Those who listen to the cobbler have cause to thank him that he helped them to understand what Jesus meant. We have need of it. We are too content. If we could grow eyes to see, ears to hear and understand even a little of the fact of the kingdom of heaven, of the Light just beyond the cloud, it would be impossible that our desire should rest anywhere but there.

The scholar met, in books and life, with many others of the same mind, great and small;

like St. Francis, the slave of God's Love; or those men of action who, though they never heard of the heavenly Light, are so conscious of human darkness that they never rest from bringing in the kingdom of heaven, by whatever other name they know it; and painters, singers, poets, cathedral-builders, who have realised here some heavenly beauty. There are the thinkers trying to express their intuitions of reality: glad-hearted, merry folk, too, who have a secret fountain of inexhaustible joy, and simple people who live better than the world—though they could not say why. They too have an unconscious certainty that there is a world of joy and beauty better than this; though their mood is not his, nor the sense of the gross mortality of external things and of the heavenly shining, nor his way of telling the good news.

II

A man came to a pond in a field on a summer day and leaned down to look into it. The water was clear and he could see that it was full of life. There were muddy things crawling at the bottom. The newts, fat and gorgeous, hung in

high places on the reeds, and now and again let go and swam up towards the light, blew a bubble which rose, like a lazy prayer, to the surface, and sank back again into the dim water. Beetles darted fiercely through the weeds and hungry caddis-worms preyed on lesser creatures. The water-boatmen rowed on the rim of the pond, always with their backs to the light. The pond was full of thousands of creatures intent on living and escaping danger in their small world: and on the surface he saw the gnats growing and thrusting out of their larvæ, leaving their shells behind and spreading their wings for a new life; they too seemed to cling still above the pond, too weak or timid at first to rise into the air. Once a great dragon-fly broke out from his case and darted away brilliant in the sunlight. But though so many of the pond-creatures ended by leaving it and entering into another life—even the newts crawled out in winter—yet the life of the pond went on all-concerned with itself only. If an angel leaned from the heavenly Light to look down into our world it would seem to him like that pond-life. If the pond-creatures had any inkling of our world, they might say that it is like a kingdom of heaven,

an ocean of light full of other worlds, and even discover that it is the air and the sunlight which freshen and brighten their darker world; and that it was the unconscious desire of it that made them grow and struggle out of their larval state—though it seemed like death—and become winged creatures.

But how great the sacrifice would be, unthinkable, if a man leaned down over that dim and cruel pond-life, not in curiosity, but with so great a pity as to be willing to leave behind his humanity and go down, as though to death, into it; to live with them, becoming what they are, that in their own speech and poverty of mind he might teach them what he knew; being born among them into their blind littleness, suffering and dying there, without perhaps the fully conscious memory to sustain him of what he left behind. But that, we believe, the Love of God has done for us. He emptied Himself of His glory, was born into our condition, and lived and died here, that He might show us the heavenly Light, in history, and in such human figure as all can understand, whether they are able or not to go the hard way the cobbler taught which leads to open vision.

CHAPTER VII

THE SUPRA-SENSUAL LIFE

I

BUT any scholar can prove the truth of the teaching in practice. If he believes that the Love of God is our Fate, that he was so created that his desire can only be satisfied, God's way, in love, and surrenders all his instincts to that almighty energy, he finds the only happiness there is. When he thought that some change in his external circumstances—to have a little more, or to remove this or that disagreeable thing, or person, from him—would content him, he was still in that simplicity of mind which believes that happiness comes from without. Obviously not: we may have everything which the external world can give and be miserable. The causes of unhappiness are spiritual. Jacob Behmen said that the spirit is a desire, a flame hungry for fuel. Its satisfaction depends upon the fuel upon which it feeds. If

it feeds on God's Love, it burns lovingly and happily in the heavenly Light. But if it feeds on sensual and external things, it burns unhappily, angrily, wearily, because these things are not its true fuel. The heavenly Light is its origin; for every soul is a spark of the Light; in the Light, therefore, it returns to its original kindling and joy. They that eat of love, which is the bread of heaven, become themselves heavenly, peaceful, content, purged from the hellish life and passions. They enter already, in this life, into heaven.

Whether, then, he is happy or not, depends, he sees, on spiritual causes; first on his own will, how it is directed; whether into the Love of God or into the misery of externalised desires. Our heaven and hell are in ourselves. If our life seems hard and starved the fault is not in our external condition, nor in the indifference of providence which does not give us what we want, but first in ourselves, in that we have not learned how to cease from the desire of that which is not meat to the soul, nor how to enrich ourselves from the Love of God. For the spirit which loves is always being revived and increased by the Love of God. It is like a cistern whose

waters, because they are always poured out, are renewed continually from the fountains above. The more it pours out, the more it draws down from the Love of God. Its waters, because they are poured out and renewed, become always sweeter, cleaner and livelier. But the spirit which draws not down from the Love of God, nor will itself go out in love, is a stagnant cistern, whose waters, because they are never renewed, become dead and breed unclean things.

It may be that we were brought up from infancy in the Christian faith and belief in love. But little children learn much by rote which they neither believe nor understand. Some there are indeed who can say, as one the scholar knew, that they cannot remember the time when they did not love the Lord Jesus and did not with all their will serve love. But many more learn the truth about love, and, because they hear it so familiarly, lose its meaning. They have to discover it again as a new thing. Their father and their mother taught them love, and they accepted it as a lesson learned under authority. But it is only after half a lifetime, perhaps never, that they understand what the Love of God is; that it is the Fate of all

creatures, able, then, to content them; in which they must rejoice, and, surrendering to it altogether, enter into their happy destiny.

II

But to love is to forget oneself; to go out from oneself. He who lives only with himself starves and dies. There comes to the scholar's mind the recollection of a man such as that, who survived his own soul. They knocked at his door one morning and found him dead. There was food and money in the house; but the windows were dark with dust and the walls stained and hung with cobwebs. There were cupboards full of old things; fine and moth-eaten clothes, old-fashioned jewels, a rusty sword; letters, many years old; worn books, and pictures of forgotten events; little relics, hoarded, numbered and indexed; unfinished writings of his own; a broken violin, and in a secret drawer things from which they turned away. They took up his body and buried it. But afterwards the scholar had gone back and stood alone in the room. The dead man was not gone. He became aware of his grey shadow moving round the

room, as he must have done, day by day, year by year, fingering the old things, fumbling in the cupboards, sitting at silent meals, dreaming vaguely, then getting to his feet and beginning again the same slow round. He saw him reading the same words in the same dead books, recounting the same relics, once more trying on the rusty sword, lifting the violin to his chin and laying it down again, so on to the next accustomed thing, as though the spell of life-long habit led him dull and unresisting and sadly content endlessly in a worn path. If only as he passes the window he would turn a little, touch and lift the curtain, be drawn to the light, perhaps he might raise his hand to the pane and rub off a little of its grime, look out and be interested in the world, even force the catch and throw the window wide, so be saved. But the thin shadow never ceased from its drifting round the room. He had survived his own soul. It died for want of love; love, which turns the eyes from self and feeds the heart and mind with new things; love, which is the resurrection and the life, the rending of tombs, the light and the noon-day and the wide world, when the soul turns abroad and forgets itself.

III

But it is one thing to believe in the supra-sensual life, and another to live it habitually; always being where the heavenly Light is, seeing all things in its illumination. Though heaven is near, within and all about us, yet the scholar learns that he cannot walk familiarly in the Light, nor have his conversation there, until all his desire, conscious and secret, leads him thither. The pure in heart see God; but how far from us the perfect purity of desire is. As the wireless receiver cannot take London's call unless it is tuned to the wave-length of the station, so we cannot hear God unless our love is attuned to His. There are still in us deep-rooted longings which hold us back. It is hard for the scholar to know what he is, beyond the pleasant picture which he makes of himself. Something he can do to catch himself unawares; not hastily to forget the sudden angry words he spoke; not to crush away into oblivion the day-dreams in which he played so distinguished a part; not to disavow the obscure covetousness which made him discontented with his lot; not to excuse the faint malice which delights in

gossip; not denying that it is his own fault when half-awake all kinds of passions, prides, angers pass through the mind; but to drag them all to the light, avow them, recognise their ugliness and their deep root in himself, desiring that no pride may blind him to his condition, but that coming to the light it may be changed. But how hard it is to think of this unconscious will as sin, far worse than outward crimes or gross offences. It lies so deep that he may live externally in perfect observance of good, and secretly be at enmity with the Love of God, impervious to the Light. Much he reads of purgation, but it is all summed up in this: to know himself, to discover every impulse in him of self-love and self-assertion; then to let them go and to create in himself a great emptiness of self which the Love of God and the heavenly Light may occupy.

IV

But as mind and desire go that way always more simply and readily there comes a time when the scholar is aware that he is living in a new world; seeing the old, external things as

they do not who never left them. He has come a little way into the supra-sensual life, has a new light on life. The open vision is for the very few; but this, the consciousness of something with which the soul contrasts the shadows of the world, though not the blinding Light itself, is its reflection. Plato spoke of it as recollection. Though that was said metaphorically, it has this quality of memory, that it is not sight, but a fainter, reflected perception. As he said again, it is as though the soul were set with its back to the source of the light, unaware whence it comes, though it lights up the shadows of the cave. Sometimes it seems like memory, sometimes like an ideal. Or it wears the likeness of quickened conscience, or of a new mental sensitiveness. The soul, not seeing its source, refers the Light to some nearer origin, to the things on which it shines, and from which it is reflected. Its new and happy familiarity with the life of love may seem like memory, as though it were an old forgotten custom. But, whether the heavenly Light is seen openly or only in reflection, it is its presence which enlightens; and, whoever receives it, in however small a measure, ever went back to the old illusions of the externalised

mind? The enlightened soul ceases to be captive to lusts and ambitions, because the Light reveals their naked ugliness and poverty. It is quick to find affinity in other souls; in those who, grown old in the supra-sensual life, carry about them a constant happy shining; in the alternating sunlight and cloud, April weather, of the newly reborn; when the crowds go by, each on his business, dull-seeming, absorbed, shrouded flames; even in evil company the ashes of love are warm.

CHAPTER VIII

ENTERING INTO THE LOVE OF GOD

I

SOMETIMES Jacob Behmen concealed his knowledge from the unready and curious, as our Lord did, in similitudes, that having ears they should hear and not understand. To the unhappy soul he spoke always with luminous simplicity. But when he would avoid the curiosity of "external reason" he wrote, as though he were an alchemist, about the philosopher's stone, and sulphur mercury and salnitre, or, as an astrologer, of Sol, Venus, Mars, Saturn, Luna; the scholar would follow him through a long and difficult, and even unfinished, paragraph only to be cast down at the end by the half-humorous question: Dost thou understand nothing here? Then art thou not born to the highest knowledge of the spagirical science. The scholar came to see that his master meant that by no

effort of the intellect could he know God. Only those who enter into His Love understand.

“If you are of a this-worldly property,” he says, “dull and dark, shut up in the house of the flesh, soar not too high with your censure and scorn, or with a critical speculation of your outward reason, lest you fall indeed into the deep abyss of darkness: but wait patiently, till the divine sun shall shine again in your dark and selfish nature, and give you some beams and glimpses of his eternal light, and then your angry vehemence shall be changed into a pure love-zeal, and your prating, pharisaical and hypocritical agitation into a meek, mild and Christian speaking of God’s works and wonders in the dispensation of His wisdom: and your doubtful, unsettled reasonings will be turned into a plerophory, or most full assurance of true joy and saving comfort in your religion; your earthly lusts into heavenly love, and your eclipsed mutable knowledge into the pure, perfect and crystalline streams of light, life and glory.”

The senses know only the external world; and the mind knows only ideas, the shadows and pale reflections of reality. Only spirit under-

stands spirit. Only love can understand God's Love. Only by growing into the Light can the scholar see what is plain only in the Light. Whoever lives only in the external world condemns himself to darkness. The mind beats against closed doors. But by practising love he may begin to understand God and himself and eternal life.

II

It is like a slow awakening out of sleep. When we sleep we forget who and what we were, and are led about by our dreams; waking, we remember the daily life and recover the mastery of our thoughts and desires. So, while his spirit is still unawakened to the heavenly Light, any man's life is like a disordered dream. As the fabled seamen came to Circe's island and there, bewitched, were turned into beasts and forgot their human nature, so the unconscious spirit is led about by its creatures, wandering like a lost sheep, or going down the broad way with the crowd—sheep, goats, foxes, wolves, Jesus said. The supra-sensual life is the spirit's coming to self-consciousness, and the recovery of its dignity

and lordship over its passions. He whose spirit sleeps is an animal and a child; a natural creature of instincts and reflexes, of unconsidered responses to external things. Like a child, he does not distinguish himself from his bodily cravings and depressions, nor from his passions and instincts. His spirit goes with them sleep-walking. For want of a master, the crowd which lives with him does what it wills, or one of them, a wolf or goat or dull sheep or fox, is master, while the god he is sleeps.

But when the heavenly Light rouses it from sleep, the spirit is like one restless with bad dreams who knows that there is a better and waking world. It begins to emerge into the daylight life; like those pond-creatures who might swim up to the surface of the water and catch the glimpse of the free glory of the air, then, sinking back, discover how dim and heavy and fear-ridden the familiar pond-world was. So the Love of God and the Light bring with them the consciousness of sin. The uneasy spirit sees its herd of passions with new eyes, their furtive faces crowding round, greedy, lascivious, cunning, foolish. It discovers what disorderly company it has kept in its own house. It would shut out

the sight of them. But it learns that only by the Light disclosing all their shame can the Love of God transform them. These creatures are its own, cannot die; but may be changed into useful servants, faithful, clever, courageous, gentle. The disordered crowd may become a happy family.

III

One day the scholar looked round and saw that all the world is in the same case. We men do not love one another. We are not even conscience-stricken. We still follow our animal instincts sleep-walking. We say that these things are natural; and so they are. We inherited them from nature. We trace them back through brutal instincts to nature. This world was made that way, until God's Love began to redeem it. Its first stages remain with us in nature, and its methods, the crowd of wild lusts. We have, anyone, seen their ugly doings, unless we go about blind—a pair of falcons floating through the summer air towards a flock of gulls over the cliff; one dips below the gull screaming, the other rips out its eyes and brain, and lets it sink down into the sea;

the pair drift away again. It is everywhere. The gull kills the fish, one fish devours another; woods, fields, gardens, air and water are a tumult of contending lusts. It is no streak of evil running through a good world, but a condition like that of any man whose spirit sleeps and whose passions run wild. The world's passions seem to run riot, hot, violent, hungry, cruel. It seems not yet all awake to God's Love.

That is what life is, still at war with itself: a "turba," as Jacob Behmen said, a crowd of individual wills thrusting each other aside, as we do in so far as we are still in our natural lusts, each for himself. One tree in the forest climbs above another and crowds it from the light, demands a place in the sun. Timid creatures creep and hunt; the strong prey on the weak, as we do until the heavenly Light wakes us to the consciousness of the Love which, when it rules, transforms and orders our hungry passions.

IV

He sees that we all share the same fate, men and nature. How simply the cobbler spoke of it. God, he said, manifests Himself in Desire

and Love. He made all things by His Desire that He might have objects for His Love. He satisfies His Desire in Love. That is God's way, and, therefore, every creature's fate. Every creature is made desirous—the spirit is a flame of desire—and all unhappiness, the struggle to survive and master, anger, greed, divisions and contentions, dryness and weariness, are only desire without love; a hungry flame without fuel; a feeding on husks; a beating against wind and tide; vainly creating evil in the Ground of Love; defeat, therefore, and unhappiness.

He had seen that the selfish are unhappy. It must be so. Selfishness is desire without love; wanting, and hungering for things for oneself. The selfish do not believe the paradox of love, that he who gives himself away does as God does and is divinely happy. Even the worldly-wise say that it is better to be temperate and careful; but still to keep a sane self-interest—a phrase, like proper pride, self-contradictory. They praise self-help; getting on in the world. Better to get on towards heaven. But they are not happy. When they get there nothing remains to look forward to but old age and death, and a going away with a soul become inevitably, by a

lifetime of self-interest, mean. Besides, repression—for they always feared desire lest it should disturb their serious aims—has damped down the flame of their spirit. But desire was not meant to die. It is the fire and energy of the spirit, no less divine than love, for both are in God. They wonder why they grow tired and life seems dry and empty after all. If only they would give their desire away into something outside of, and greater than, themselves, then their spirit would kindle at it, love and burn with enthusiasms, and they would discover that they were alive and happy—because it is in the nature of things. It is eternal life, God's own way to joy.

v

Indeed, it seems simple; even babies understand it: but the worldly-wise forget. The old certainty comes back to the scholar as he goes along that paradoxical road, with difficulty, but never with any doubt, because every step proves that he goes the right way.

But how reconcile selflessness with business conditions? How be rid of self-interest in a

society founded on individualism? How live at peace when all the world goes to war? Only when our common fate overtakes us shall we be able to live out here what we know. Only when society remakes itself on a new model will the time come when we can, in fact and in deed, always be loving our neighbour as ourselves. When nations agree to cease from war, when business becomes co-operation, then whoever is now helplessly involved in conditions which he knows to be wrong will be freed from his perplexities of conduct. But there is no short cut to a heaven on earth for anyone. We are not saved out of the world: we are too much one with it—and gladly, Jacob Behmen would have said, for who that knows anything of the Love of God would wish to leave the rest to perish? Though the Tower of Siloam falls on the guilty and innocent alike, it is not the innocent, if they understand the Love of God, who will complain: for that is the very essence of the Love of God, that it suffers for the guilty; so, as St. Paul said, they make up the measure of the sufferings of Christ. More and more the scholar comes to see that there is a common destiny for all the world—groans and travails

in pain unto that day—and that he must think that, if he has indeed learnt a little of the Love of God and of the Light, it is not for himself that he uses what he knows; accomplishing his own salvation, yes, but serving a greater purpose than he had thought.

VI

A strange outlook, some may think, that of Jacob Behmen. He said that there is a Love which is the very generation and nature of God and every creature's Fate, and a spiritual Light in the glory of which this mortal and material world is darkness. Here we are under the natural dominion of desire averted from God's Love and unawakened to the Light: under worldly passions and instincts; and, in their disappointment and emptiness, we share with the world the unhappiness of every creature which will not go God's way. He satisfies His Desire in His Love. But the world may return to His Love and come again into the heavenly Light. The long tragedy will not have been meaningless, because the prodigal has gained a divine understanding of good and evil. He that was a child

has become full-grown. Jacob Behmen did not argue about these things. He said that he had seen: we who have not seen cannot say that he was wrong. At least he knew how to live. He was poor, and happy; unknown in his own time, and content. He had to leave home and travel as a journeyman cobbler, but was always singing and praising God for His wonderful works. When someone denounced him as a heretic, the tribunal could find no fault with this strange good man. But after his death his influence spread abroad, increasing to this day, because many were convinced that his teaching was true: many unhappy people believed what he said of the Love of God and of their hungry lusts and, finding happiness his way, desired to understand more of what he had to tell. He would always have said that certainty comes by living what we believe.

CHAPTER IX

GOING AWAY

I

BUT the scholar cannot stay always in the school; he must go back to the world; not that his learning is ended, but because it will never end. He has to say good-bye to the quiet, heavenly place. As he stands on the door-step, the world to which he has returned seems dim, the sun pale, the wind cold. But sadness is forbidden to him, because the Love of God is everywhere. The world seems bigger than it was. As he moves down the street, the present moment is like one step on a road which stretches back into an immense and faded past and goes on into a future known only to the vast purposes of God's Love; not as when he thought rarely of greater things and much of his own hours and concerns.

On the journey he feels as though he were coming back to work after holidays. Bright

memories pass across the drifting scene: the fields grow rarer as the train nears the city; the spaced houses become rows: commonplace, crowded, dingy. A gloom seems to settle over them: but he must never forget the heavenly Light, but carry it with him, everywhere and always, as a happy refuge and assurance. Indeed, it seems to be near, keeping him from falling into the mental sleep of everyday things. Those rows of houses are not indifferent, but lives, families, poverty, joys and sorrows, the ignorance, sufferings or blind contentment of hundreds of thousands of people. Unheavenly conditions; the factories, warehouses, shops, the distant docks, the names written over them, suggest that word which he heard in the school—Jacob Behmen's "turba," the disordered crowd, everyone trying out of the heap to get what he can; to entice someone to his shop, to shout his name from his warehouse roof, or spoil the beauty of the river with a glaring sign, that he may get a livelihood. Few succeed: most live, half alive, in ugly surroundings. There is not yet a waking heavenly spirit directing it all. And if one wrote on the sky that only the Love of God can create order in this heap of

struggling individualisms, how many would understand that, or want it?

But he remembers, happily, those who have always understood and now, in greater numbers, believe that the end of these disordered ways and licensed passions is near; Christians thinking out what the mind of Christ is for politics, citizenship, at home and in industry, working hard, giving great sums of money to further their ideals; and rougher folk with a passion for better conditions in every country. An angel must have come down and troubled the pool. Timid people ask for quiet times; but the world is being shaken awake. Others there are, world-wide, who are roused to the horror of war and to the unity of men. More closely than ever he must ally himself with them in their thinking and activity. He remembers that he never spent happier hours than in the company of those strong, eager and laughing men and women of whom the world begins to be afraid; who are like conspirators in a beleaguered city sowing uncertainty in the minds of the besieged. To what shifts and panic stupidities the enemy resorts in desperation, while his men slip out of the gates and go over to the besiegers, or

their parties break up to go two ways. Beyond, the chariots and horsemen of the Light ride on the hills. At night, in the stillness, there is a sound like the distant tramp of victory. A high adventure, big enough to swallow up all the petty concerns for oneself which make folk miserable.

II

The ten people in the carriage are not strangers, for we are all alike, of one nature, one origin: spirits, asleep, or waking, or uneasy, living each with its creatures. Which of his own animals is most troublesome to him? They are quiet just now while he watches them. Are they losing their old likenesses; the yellow rage of his tiger, the peacock's strutting love of display, the fox which uses sly methods, and uglier reptiles which try to fascinate him? He wonders whether he does wrong to see other folk so. Sleek some of them seem, like cats, purring over their contentment. Others are agitated, barking up any tree. A newspaper in the hand of the man opposite suggests the picture of the bull-man who owns it, bellowing every day some new scare to send the rabbits

scuttling to security. There are headlines across the page crying tales of lusts, murders and vanities, as though all the animals in the land had broken loose, and law and police were chasing them, like cowboys, into pens. If that were really what the people care about, and if they really accept the sneers and suppressions with which what they read deals with the best of life, how can they ever hear of the Love of God or see the heavenly Light?

But, he thinks, we misjudge one another because we wear our animal outside like our coat, and our spirit is not often so unselfconscious that it will reveal itself to others. It hides behind its coat of flesh because it knows that it is naked, and is ashamed, as Adam and Eve were after their sin. Our animals tend to externality, too, because their hunger goes that way. As one eats, so one becomes. We feed on external things, and become fleshly. We cannot hide our animals; they write their lines on our faces and seal their names on us, just as the spirit also can shine through the heavy flesh. But, because we hide our secret spirit behind the gross concealment of the flesh, we know each other very little. If we would see

the spirit within, it would not seem so difficult to believe that all men can enter into the Love of God. The flame can burn happily only in the Love of God, the spirit be satisfied only in its Fate. It must, therefore, always be seeking God, even when it knows not what it is seeking, and goes away farther from His Love on false quests. We cannot know what deception, or sense of life's emptiness, we conceal from one another; which in the end must bring us to ourselves. Some are not ready yet, have not discovered their mistake; some are children happy for a time with toys; some persist, and force and drug themselves to go on, because their pride will not yield; talk extravagantly because they are afraid; but, underneath, there is that which cannot be happy without God's Love. So, he thinks, because we were all created in desire, and desire is satisfied only in love, our animals cannot content us; and there are few who, if one could get to them, entice their shy spirit with sympathy, would not respond. He remembers travelling all night with three strangers and how for hours, unaware of the time, they talked of life and religion and experience.

III

That is true and hopeful, that every human soul has in it the spark of a divine origin which can be kindled to flame in God's Love; yet, he remembers with misgiving, Jacob Behmen said that there is wickedness so far removed from God's Love that it has lost even the apprehension of good; which lives in a world of its own creation where there is no good, nor thought of it. Perhaps no man is come to that pass; God can still grow upon all of us. But we are not so far from hell that what belongs to it cannot have its unexpelled part in us.

The end of an old daydream comes back to him: a cavern, far away, at the ends of the earth, where a fire burned. Changing shapes slid in the hollows, swayed gliding on the pinnacles. They were like memories, clinging, unforgiven. The ice groaned, as though a frozen heart ground out its agony: and a figure, huge and evil, lay there, face downwards, clutching the sandy floor with crooked fingers. The Pit gaped behind. The fire drooped and climbed again; someone stood in the mouth of the cave, tall and still, like a tower white in the twilight. The dark

figure leaped to its feet: the Pit yawned open: night welled to its lip: in the dream his heart stood still. They fought, as never men fought. Twice the evil shape reeled back, wounded, with wounds Crosswise. Panting and desperate he crouched at the edge of the Pit; darkness welled up and gripped his feet. He stared into the Other's face, then, crying out awfully, covered his face with his arm, and sank back, like a tree hewn away at the root, and went down into the Pit. And they say that it is bottomless. Above in the night the stars leaped and flamed, and the people waited voiceless. But at last their Saviour came up out of the Pit's mouth. They ran and threw their arms about His knees and could not speak. But afterwards they followed Him, away through a new and singing world.

IV

The train whistled twice, wound its slow length across the bridge and drew to a standstill under the great roof. The people poured out from it, talking, laughing or thoughtful, flowed like a stream into the street, broke up

into rivulets, went their way among the solemn buildings. The daily work will absorb us until evening. Each will become the centre of his own world, will lose the sense of greater issues; just as we were, before the Great War, occupied, unconscious of, and unconcerned with the elemental hate which was to overwhelm us: just as they did in the days of Noah before the Flood. That is our trouble; that we go about occupied, wrapped in self-interest, trying to make ourselves happy.

It all ends, he thinks, in the same conclusion: that we are subject to a loveless desire, instinctive and inherited, which keeps us from heaven. It keeps us self-centred, self-interested. It does not come to us, in our innocent purity, as an enemy recognised and dreadful, but belongs to us naturally, as part of our instinct, so that we do not know it for what it is until we discover God's Love in contrast with it. Then we see what it has done to us. It is that in us which brings us into divisions and hatreds and disorganises life, confining us to our own concerns, preventing our interest in great issues. Its self-seeking will not let us give ourselves away, and empty ourselves so that we may be filled again

from the divine sources. It is that which chokes the original flame in us which can burn and be enlivened only by love, its true fuel. It is that which drugs the waking spirit and lays a heavy hand upon the eyes which begin to see the Light, and says: There is nothing; why strain through the darkness? there is nothing, be like other men, content: and while our spirit sleeps and its ugly creatures run wild, we come, in our deepening unconsciousness of the Light, near to hell, where it is not even believed that there is anything but black night. The soul's hardest conflict is not with ugly temptations, but with that deadening sleep out of which it has to struggle to awake, to fight its way up out of comfort and instinct and dreams to the daylight in which we see that we were asleep and in danger of never waking. Indeed, we should never wake, nor be uneasy in our sleep here, but for the descent of the Love of God bringing the disturbing Light. God troubles us, angers us with His shaking of the soul awake. His rousings seem disastrous. But there may be no way to wake some of us short of pulling our house down on our heads. Better then to wake of ourselves, gently as at dawn, into a new life.

But when we waken a little into the Light and come with Jacob Behmen not so far from our Lord's outlook, how obvious, he thinks, the truth must always be. This world is not heaven. God is a spirit: His creations, and heavenly things, are spiritual. This world is material and mortal. The great cathedral yonder is, they say, dangerous through decay. The shadow lies upon us and weighs down the spirit. The faces which pass by, young and light, middle-aged and sober, old and tired, are all going, in the body, the same way. Himself will spend all day getting from one place to another, hindered by the body and material things. Though we be spirits, in origin therefore of God's world, here we are spirits confined, restricted, because our loveless desire else would hurt God's peace; perhaps to say in prison is too hard a phrase, but at least in a strict school; which we would make the better, because the better the school the better the scholar. How plain the contrast of spirit seems with this externality, coarse and heavy and dying. How plain that if God's Love had not pursued us here we should have been like those who do not even know that there is a heaven. But the Light shone in

our darkness for all to see, in history and in the flesh. He wounded evil to the death on the Cross. Some find it hard to think the story true, but not those who have passed a time in Jacob Behmen's School, and, through his eyes, have looked down into the world from the heavenly Light.

THE END

